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More Than 7,000 People Killed in Fires in Russia Last Year, Official Data Shows

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More than 7,000 people have died in fire-related accidents in Russia in 2018, according to data released Wednesday by Russia's Investigative Committee.

Sixty people, many of them children, died in the Siberian city of Kemerovo in March 2018 after the Winter Cherry mall caught on fire due to faulty wiring. Inspections uncovered violations in at least half of the shopping malls across Russia in the wake of the fire.

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A total of 7,296 people were killed in fires last year across the country, the Investigative Committee said.

The highest numbers of deaths were seen in Sverdlovsk region with 245 deaths followed by Moscow region with 219, the committee reported. The number of minors killed in fires

increased from 359 in 2017 to 458 in 2018.

The majority of deaths (63 percent) were associated with leaving open fires unattended. Fires caused by companies and organizations with inadequate, or a lack of, fire safety equipment or procedures also contributed to a large portion of deaths (22 percent).

The report noted how seasonal changes can affect the number of fire-related deaths. Fires are most likely in winter, when use of electric stoves and heating appliances increases. Remote or rural communities have a lower chance of survival in fire-related accidents due to their distance from medical care and fire brigade services.

The Investigative Committee recommended a "comprehensive approach" to reduce the rate of fire-related deaths, including changing federal law to increase inspections of residential buildings and making fire safety reading materials more readily available in commercial buildings.

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